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SILVAE 3.1 AND STATIUS' POETIC TEMPLE*

In the preface to each book of his collected poems, the *Silvae*, Statius writes in the apologetic mode. Addressing his friend Arruntius Stella in the preface to Book 1, he claims that his poems are mere impromptu productions, 'qui mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi voluptate fluxerunt', and he worries that by the time they reach publication they may have lost their only charm, that of speed, 'celeritas'.[1] Statius makes the same claims for impromptu production with the poem I will be discussing in this article, *Silvae* 3.1, which celebrates the remodelling of the temple of Hercules on the private Campanian estate that belonged to Statius' friend Pollius Felix:[2] 'nam primum limen eius Hercules Surrentinus aperit, quem in litore tuo consecratum, statim ut videram, his versibus adoravi' (praef. 3).

Statius' belittlement of his *Silvae* has all too often been taken at face value.[3] However, just as Catullus' reference in the first poem of his collection to his 'libellus' had the effect of drawing attention to his meticulous artistry, for he far exceeded the expectations aroused by the claim to have written 'just a little book',[4] Statius' remarks about his own 'minor' poetry can be seen as deriving from a tradition of belittlement. We are meant to be surprised by poems that far surpass his modest claims.[5]

By looking carefully at the first poem of Book 3, I wish to suggest that we should not indeed take Statius' self-condemnatory remarks at face value, for they cloak a pride in his contribution to the art of the short poem. Whether we accept that the third book of the *Silvae* formed the final one of a first collection, or that the books were published sequentially, it should not be surprising that in the opening poem to

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[1] All quotations of Statius' *Silvae* are from the Oxford text of E. Courtney, *P. Papini Stati Silvae* (Oxford, 1990); all quotations of Vergil's *Georgics* are from the Oxford text of R. A. B. Mynors, *P. Vergili Maronis Opera* (Oxford, 1969). Recent bibliographic surveys on the *Silvae* appear in *ANRW* 32.5 (1986), in the consecutive articles of H. Cancik, 'Statius, "Silvae" Ein Bericht über die Forschung seit Friedrich Vollmer (1898)', 2681–726, and H-J. van Dam, 'Statius, "Silvae" Forschungsbericht 1974–1984', 2727–53.

[2] For Pollius Felix see J. H. D'Arms, 'Puteoli in the Second Century', *JRS* 64 (1974), 104–24, p. 111; R. G. M. Nisbet, 'Felicitas at Surrentum', *JRS* 68 (1978), 1–12, pp. 1–4; A. Hardie, *Statius and the 'Silvae'* (Liverpool, 1983), pp. 67–8, hereafter cited as Hardie only.

[3] Statius has received bad press ever since Juvenal, *Sat.* 7.87 accused him of prostituting his art. But S. T. Newmyer, *The Silvae of Statius: Structure and Theme*, *Mnemos.* Suppl. 53 (Leiden, 1979), sensibly points out that 'Statius' repeated emphasis upon the speed with which the poems were written, and the likelihood of unfavourable criticism levelled against the *Silvae* in the poet's lifetime, have caused critics to overlook the possibility that Statius' claims of hasty workmanship may be a reflection of a commonplace prevalent in Roman poetry whereby an author makes light of the effort which he has put into his compositions and accordingly minimizes their value' (p. 8).

[4] Catullus refers to his poetry book as 'libellus' twice in the ten lines of his opening poem (1 and 8) and calls his poems 'nugas' (4).

[5] K. M. Coleman, *Statius 'Silvae' IV* (Oxford, 1988), rightly sees Statius' modesty as 'feigned', and his apologies for his speed of composition as containing 'deliberate irony' (p. xxvi). Hereafter cited as Coleman only.

Silvae 3 Statius evaluates the new direction his poetry has been taking from his previous work.[6] He is conscious that in the *Silvae* he is charting new ground with the short poem in Latin literature. As Alex Hardie observes, 'there is nothing quite like the *Silvae* in extant Latin poetry'.[7] Statius is no mindless imitator of Callimachus or Vergil bowed down under the weight of a past which he is conscious he will never emulate. Rather in the *Silvae* he shows himself to be an independently creative poet who is interested in charting new ground with humour and wit. *Silvae* 3.1 demonstrates that the qualities for which Statius apologises in his prefaces, improvisational and speedy production, may be virtues. It is a programmatic poem that subtly defines and justifies the poetics of the *Silvae* as they have evolved through the first three books.[8]

Statius' process of definition for his new kind of poetry is chiefly articulated through the interplay between himself and his literary models, chiefly Callimachus and Vergil. Statius' poem centres around the figure of Hercules, and Richard Thomas has pointed out that both Callimachus and Vergil start their third poetry books in the *Aetia* and *Georgics* respectively with poems referring to Hercules.[9] The opening of *Aetia* 3, the so-called 'Victoria Berenices', is an epinician honouring Queen Berenice. Its inner panel seems to have been an aetion of the founding of the Nemean games by Hercules.[10] In line 29 of *Silvae* 3.1 Statius refers to the 'pauperis arva Molorchi', a reference to the poor man who in Callimachus' *Aetia* 3 entertained Hercules before his fight with the Nemean lion. The name Molorchus occurs earlier in Roman literature only twice and both times in poems that refer clearly to Callimachus. One of these instances is in the proem to *Georgics* 3, at line 19.[11]

In the proem to the third *Georgic*, however, Vergil announces his intention to give up Callimachean themes for political and historical subjects. Thomas posits that *Silvae* 3.1 is directly influenced by *Aetia* 3, but not by the proem to *Georgics* 3.[12] This is a surprising conclusion. Certainly Statius has a major debt to Callimachus. *Silvae* 3.1 is in part an aetion dealing with the revival of a cult, 'intermissa ... sacra' (1), and with the origins of the remodelled temple to Hercules on Pollius' estate, the sort of themes that interested Callimachus; the word 'causas', origins, stands prominently before the caesura in the second line of Statius' poem.[13] And Thomas points out that

[6] See Coleman, pp. xvi–xvii for a succinct discussion of this problem.

[7] Hardie, p. 74.

[8] In this article my remarks pertain strictly to the first three books of the *Silvae* which I see as evolving in an experimental fashion, with certain thematic concerns culminating in Book 3. Books 1–3 may well have been published as a unit (see Coleman, op. cit. (n. 6)); Book 4 was published later, and although the chief stylistic features of the *Silvae* continue in Book 4, thematically it is divergent in directing its first three poems to the emperor, compared to four in the previous three books. The first three books mark a process of increasing disengagement from Rome and imperial concerns; Book 4 in part reverses that process. See Coleman, pp. xix–xxii. F. Ahl, 'Politics and Power in Roman Poetry', *ANRW* 32.1 (1984), 40–124, pp. 88–91, doubts that Statius in Book 4 had undergone any significant change of attitude towards the emperor; as always, the poet counsels us to read between the lines.

[9] R. F. Thomas, 'Callimachus, the "Victoria Berenices", and Roman Poetry', *CQ* 33 (1983), 92–113. Hereafter cited as Thomas only. Thomas draws upon the important article of P. J. Parsons, 'Callimachus: Victoria Berenices', *ZPE* 25 (1977), 1–50.

[10] Thomas, pp. 94–5.

[11] The name appears as an adjective, 'Molorcheis', in *Panegyricus Messallae* 13, with clear reference to Callimachean aesthetic principles. As a proper noun Molorchus occurs three times in Statius, all connected with Hercules, *Theb.* 4.159–64; *Silvae* 3.1.29, and 4.6.51.

[12] Thomas, p. 105.

[13] On the topic of broken or interrupted ritual practices see Pfeiffer on fr. 91, with reference to the ending of the sacrifice of a newborn child at the Isthmian games; also on frr. 98 and 667.

in *Silvae* 1.2 Statius compares himself to Callimachus.[14] However, this acknowledgment comes in a list in which Philetas of Cos, Propertius, Ovid, and Tibullus are mentioned (*Silvae* 1.2.252–3), and Callimachus is not singled out from these four other poets. The balance in this list is given to the Augustan poets. Not only in the *Thebaid* but also in the *Silvae* Statius acknowledges the influence of Vergil, calling him his great master, 'magni ... magistri', in *Silvae* 4.4.55.[15] Bright too has suggested that the title of Statius' collection may owe something to the programmatic meaning that the term 'silvae' assumes in Vergil's *Eclogues*.[16] And in the preface to Book 1 Statius compares his *Silvae* to Vergil's supposed early work, the *Culex*.[17]

Despite his show of allegiance to Callimachus in his choice of short aetiological or ecphrastic poems in the *Silvae*, Statius shows his independence from him in writing (or claiming to write) improvisational, hasty poems with a self-advertising zest that was foreign to Hellenistic tenets of careful, meticulous artistry. Moreover, the 'Victoria Berenices' concerned the victory of Queen Berenice at the Nemean games; as Parsons so neatly puts it, 'epinician embraced aetion'.[18] But *Silvae* 3.1 is not an epinician; games enter the poem only tangentially. And it is not addressed to a political leader but to a private individual, Statius' friend Pollius, who leads a sequestered life outwith the realms of politics and power.

The substitution of a private personage in place of a royal or imperial one reflects Statius' exaltation in *Silvae* 3.1 both of private life removed from political affairs, and of its corollary, poetry that is divorced from the typically epic concerns of 'reges et proelia'. In addition to recalling Callimachus, the opening of the poem – 'Intermissa tibi renovat, Tirynthie, sacra / Pollius' (1–2) – echoes the opening of Horace's fourth book of the *Odes*, 'Intermissa, Venus, diu / rursus bella moves?' (*Odes* 4.1.1–2). Both poems have the same opening formula of 'intermissa' followed by an address to a deity. However, as Statius substitutes 'sacra' for 'bella', makes Pollius the subject instead of himself, and rephrases as a positive statement Horace's pained question, his invocation of his deity is joyful, not fearful. He thus suggests he is taking a different direction from Horace who, in the fourth book of the *Odes*, announces his intention to move away from personal poetry. Horace turns instead towards the emperor and, abandoning his previously aloof individual stance, accepts a public role.[19] Book 3 of the *Silvae*, on the other hand, contains no poems addressed to the emperor and is framed by two poems purportedly written in retirement at Naples, both recom-

[14] *Silvae* 1.2.252–5. Note that Statius does not here set his *poetry* in a tradition that includes Callimachus (cf. Thomas, p. 103); in *Silvae* 1.2 he associates Callimachus and the others only with epithalamia, 'carmina festis / digna toris' (251–2).

[15] G. Williams, 'Statius and Vergil: Defensive Imitation', *Vergil at 2000* (New York, 1986), pp. 207–24, translates 'magni magistri' as 'my greater master' (220), and thus lends false support to his view of Statius as an anxious emulator of Vergil, obsessively suffering from an inferiority complex.

[16] D. Bright, *Elaborate Disarray: the Nature of Statius' Silvae* (*Beiträge zur klassischen Philologie* 108, Meisenheim an Glan, 1980), pp. 37–9. In *Georgics* 3.40 Vergil uses 'silvae' as a metaphor of his present poetry. See n. 20, below.

[17] No false modesty here, as he couples Vergil's *Culex* with Homer's supposed *Batrachomyomachia*.

[18] Parsons, op. cit. (n. 9), p. 39.

[19] M. C. J. Putnam, *Artifices of Eternity: Horace's Fourth Book of Odes* (Ithaca, 1986), interprets *Odes* 4.1 as 'a leave-taking from the writing of private amatory lyric' (p. 25). The fourth book of *Odes* mark a dramatic change in poetic and personal direction. 'What changes, and changes most dramatically, is the poet's stance towards history, politics, and the wider public circumstances of his world' (p. 307). Suetonius, *Vita Horati*, provides testimony early on of negative reaction, founded on the belief that Augustus ordered the poems in the fourth book of the *Odes*.

mending the benefits of life divorced from civic duties.[20] In the third book of the *Silvae*, Statius completes a move away from the emperor to personal, private poetry and to separation from the contemporary world of politics and power which Horace, late in his career, chose to embrace. The Horatian allusion then has a bite to it, for Statius' agonistic relationship to Horace here helps define his poetic commitment to private, personal poetry.

Statius' literary allusions then are not mere passive repetitions. His response to his literary models is clearly expressed not only through important similarities, but through crucial differences that chart the poetic distance Statius has travelled from them.[21] The influence of Horace on *Silvae* 3.1 does not seem to extend beyond these opening lines, however.[22] More important I believe is the influence of Vergil who, in the proem to *Georgics* 3, like Horace announces his intention of turning from a lesser genre, rural poetry, to write about the deeds of a contemporary political figure, Octavian. In *Silvae* 3.1 Statius uses the proem to *Georgics* 3.1 as a frame of reference through which he can justify his move in the opposite direction from Vergil. Whereas in the proem to *Georgics* 3 Vergil is contemplating an epic that deals with contemporary political themes, Statius has at least most of his epic, the *Thebaid*, behind him, and is in effect, late in his career, reversing the path followed by Vergil by now experimenting with the short, Callimachean-style poem.[23] Callimachus' 'Victoria Berenices' does not seem to have had the tension that arises from Vergil's announcement that he plans to abandon rural and mythical themes for epic ones dealing with contemporary historical issues. In *Silvae* 3.1, however, Statius exploits

[20] *Silvae* 3.5 takes the form of a letter urging his wife to leave the madness of Rome and join him in retreat at Naples. Hardie speculates that Statius' relationships with Domitian were none too good at the time of publication of the first three books of the *Silvae*, probably in A.D. 93 or 94, and that 'the joint issue of *Silvae* 1–3 were intended as the parting shot of an ailing and, perhaps, disappointed Statius to Naples' (p. 65). This is an attractive theory. Certainly Statius makes a strongly worded reference in *Silvae* 3.5 to the emperor as the cruel and ungrateful Jupiter who failed to recognise properly Statius' poetic talent (31–3). The exact dates for the departure to the Bay of Naples are, however, problematic, and it is not clear how long Statius in fact lived in Campania. Only the preface to book 4 and *Silvae* 4.4 were definitely written at Naples. (See Coleman, pp. xx–xxii.) Moreover, Statius is careful in all his poems to say nothing that would directly offend the emperor, so 'parting shot' may be too strongly worded. His position is defensive rather than aggressive. We can at least say that the general fluctuations of Statius' career, as well as the instability and danger of power politics in Domitian's Rome, help to some extent explain the specific thematic and poetic concerns found in Book 3.

[21] My position towards Statius' 'intertextuality' then is somewhat different from that of Williams, op. cit. (n. 15), and of D. W. T. Vessey, who, in 'Style and Theme in Statius' *Silvae*', *ANRW* 32.5 (1986), 2554–802, sees the problem of imitation as germane to the *Silvae* and to 'mannerist', post-classical literature. He defines mannerism as 'the disintegrating and disorienting renewal of artists whose attention, amounting almost to the obsessive, is concentrated on particular facets of the past rather than on any attempt – seen as certain of failure – to recreate it in all its details' (2757). In an earlier work, *Statius and the Thebaid* (Cambridge, 1973), he defined 'mannerism' as 'a disease of classicism' (p. 8).

[22] It was important for Statius to acknowledge his extensive debt to Horace in Book 3 of the *Silvae*, although that debt is not expressed beyond the opening lines of 3.1. In his sensitive article E. Burck, 'Retractatio: Statius an seine Gattin Claudia (Silv. 3.5)', *WS* 100 (1987), 137–53, has demonstrated the pervasive influence upon this poem of Horace's *Odes* 2.6; Hardie, op. cit. (n. 2), pp. 156–64, has shown that the main model for *Silvae* 3.2 is Horace's propempticon, *Odes* 1.3.

[23] Statius seems to have spent twelve years on the *Thebaid*, which was published about A.D. 92. The *Silvae* therefore were composed in the later stages of the epic or after its completion. The earliest references to his writing of his subsequent epic, the *Achilleid*, occur in *Silvae* 4.4.93f. and 4.7.23, a later book which contains more acknowledgement of the emperor than any other book and which perhaps with its publication in 95 marks a period of reconciliation with Domitian in 94–95. See Coleman, pp. xix–xxii.

this tension in order to define the literary character of his new poetic endeavours as well as implicitly justify his decision to turn away from 'arma' and 'reges' to the peaceful themes of private poetry. Certainly *Silvae* 3.1 is Callimachean in its witty, allusive manner and its choice of subject. But as a polemical piece, the proem to *Georgics* 3 provides Statius with an important frame of reference for the articulation of his own ideas about his new style of poetry.

A look at the similarities between the proem to *Georgics* 3 and the first poem of *Silvae* 3 will bring out the clear literary relationship between the two works. It is not at all certain that the opening to *Aetia* 3, the 'Victoria Berenices', involved a temple. But the poems of Vergil and Statius both describe temples. Vergil's temple is dedicated to Octavian and is an imaginary one which functions as a metaphor of the epic poem he plans to write. Statius' temple is a real one dedicated to Hercules, although it also, as I shall argue later, has a metaphorical aspect. Both temples are situated in Italy, and in the homeland of the poet, Vergil's in Mantua (12–15), Statius' at Sorrento on the Bay of Naples, 'notas sirenum nomine rupis' (64), the area in which he was brought up.[24] Both temples will institute new games that, they claim, will surpass the famous games of Greece:

> illi victor ego et Tyrio conspectus in ostro
> centum quadriiugos agitabo ad flumina currus.
> cuncta mihi Alpheum linquens lucosque Molorchi
> cursibus et crudo decernet Graecia caestu. (*G.* 3.17–20)

> hos nec Pisaeus honores
> luppiter aut Cirrhae pater aspernetur opacae.
> nil his triste locis; cedat lacrimabilis Isthmos,
> cedat atrox Nemee: litat hic felicior infans. (*S.* 3.1.139–42)

Statius gives a moral reason for the superiority of these private games. They are free from the grim origins and cultic practices associated with the early stages of the panhellenic games. The origins of the panhellenic games seem to have fascinated Callimachus in his *Aetia*. For instance Herakles' founding of the Nemean games forms an important part of *Aetia* 3, and reference is made there and in fr. 384.26 Pf. to the refounding of the games in honour of the infant Archemorus, who was killed by a snake in the course of the war against Thebes.[25] In frr. 76–7 Pf. Callimachus deals with the circumstances surrounding Herakles' foundation of the Olympian games, circumstances involving much slaughter of men. In fr. 91 Pf. Callimachus discusses the Isthmian games, founded in honour of Melicertes whose mother Ino tried to drown him in her suicide attempt, and whose cult involved infant sacrifice.[26] With Callimachean allusiveness Statius refers to these ancient practices. However, his 'praeteritio' is not simply playful. With the repeated, emphatic 'cedat' (141–2) and with the observation 'litat felicior infans' (142), Statius is distancing himself from Callimachus here. His aetiological interests are deliberately circumscribed, for he has no desire to delve into the past to uncover ancient horrors, a task he himself undertook in the *Thebaid*. His games, like his new poetry, represent a withdrawal from the national arena and from a mythic past that is associated with violence and suffering. Like Vergil in the proem to *Georgics* 3 his mood is festive and optimistic, his Italian games unsullied by the errors and troubles of the past.

[24] See *Silvae* 3.5.12–13.

[25] This was a version that Statius would undoubtedly have in mind as Archemorus' death is a central episode in the *Thebaid*.

[26] The morbid association of Melicertes with child sacrifice seems to have been of particular fascination to Hellenistic poets. Thus Lycophron, *Alexandra* 229 calls Melicertes βρεφοκτόνος.

In keeping with the spirit of enthusiasm that pervades both poems, Vergil and Statius play a part in the ceremonies, and both bring gifts:

> ipse caput tonsae foliis ornatus olivae
> dona feram. (*G.* 3.21–2)
>
> haec ego nascentis laetus bacchatus ad aras
> libamenta tuli. (*S.* 3.1.164–5)

Both poets too describe their present mode of poetry in Callimachean terms as 'untouched', a metaphor related to Callimachus' images of the untrodden path and unsullied spring. At the end of the proem to *Georgics* 3 Vergil describes his present, agricultural poetry as 'intactos'; in *Silvae* 3.1.67 Statius refers to the kind of poetry he and Pollius love to learn as 'intactaque carmina'.[27] Statius thus suggests both his allegiance to Vergil and his independence from him, for he endorses the kind of poetry which, in the proem to *Georgics* 3, Vergil announces he will soon reject for the heights of epic. At the same time too Statius subtly indicates his own independence from Callimachus. Statius tells us that he cultivated these untouched flowers of poetry on the day on which the cult of Diana at Aricia was being celebrated. He and his friends, however, do not participate in the rites (55–67). As Servius tells us, Callimachus was interested in this cult and wrote about it.[28] Statius however deliberately sets himself apart from the cult and the type of investigative poetry that tracked down rites involving such horrors as human sacrifice. In other words, although he stays in Pollius' garden practising Callimachean-style poetry, like Vergil he interprets Callimachus in his own terms, in a way that is appropriate to his own brand of private, personal poetry.

Both poems honour the god who will inhabit the new temple, Octavian and Hercules respectively, and both these figures encompass important literary concerns. In *Georgics* 3 Octavian is a programmatic figure for the kind of public, heroic poetry Vergil hopes to write. Statius' Hercules is likewise a programmatic figure, but for a different kind of poetry, a kind that has deliberately moved away from epic's typical concern with destructive violence and has adopted Hellenistic principles of playfulness, allusiveness, and wit. Here Statius departs significantly from his Vergilian model. In his role as temple resident Hercules is not represented as a military leader or indeed as the Roman god of imperial cult. Whereas Octavian is portrayed in Vergil's temple as a Roman leader, associated at Actium with the deified Romulus (27), Statius' Hercules is summoned to the temple as a purely Greek god. The day on which the idea for Pollius' temple was conceived and the preceding day were important Roman festivals celebrating Hercules Invictus as god of an important state cult centred in the Circus Maximus.[29] Statius however makes no reference to these festivals. His silence is all the more notable since he does mention that the Roman festival of Aventine Diana was taking place on the thirteenth and says that 'all Italy was celebrating the Ides of Hecate' (60). All Italy, that is, except Pollius and his friends, who stay on the estate learning poetry, 'intactaque carmina' (67), in the Hellenistic tradition. Like the god, they and their poetry remain separate from state

[27] *G.* 3.40–1: 'interea Dryadum silvas saltusque sequamur, / intactos'; *Silvae* 3.1.66–7: 'assidue moresque viri pacemque novosque / Pieridum flores intactaque carmina discens.' Note that 'silvas' in Vergil metaphorically refers to his poetry; through verbal linkage Statius associates peace, 'pacemque', with 'intactaque carmina'.

[28] Fr. 190 Pf.; Servius *ad Aen.* 7.778. The topic fascinated another aetiological poet, Ovid, who in his *Fasti* refers to the myth at 3.263–6, and more fully at 6.739ff.

[29] See H. H. Scullard, *Festivals and Ceremonies of the Roman Republic* (Ithaca and New York, 1981), pp. 171–3. The state festival for these days was probably held at the Ara Maxima where a heifer was sacrificed. Compare Statius' bloodless offering at lines 163–4.

religion and issues of national and political significance; they operate only in the private sphere.

Statius' Hercules then is Greek in association and, as founder of a new cult and games, the god appears in a role that is familiar to him in Callimachus' *Aetia*. However, his cult on Pollius' estate, as I have said, is free from cruel and savage traditions and, of course, lacking in importance outside the confines of Pollius' estate. The Hercules that Statius summons to his new temple is adapted to a way of life and a poem that celebrates detachment from the constraints and obligations of the outside world.

Furthermore, in his role of temple resident Statius' Hercules is specifically dissociated from the warlike themes of epic poetry. On inviting the god to his new temple, Statius asks him to disarm and disrobe: 'Lay down your fierce bow, your savage quiver, and the club stained heavily with the blood of kings; remove the lion skin from your rough shoulders', Statius asks him at lines 34–6; that is, the god is not to come in epic guise equipped for bloodshed, and, as we have seen, he is to leave behind the places and people associated with his mythical labours. These lines evoke the opening of book 3 of Ovid's *Fasti*, where Ovid in his role as aetiological poet invites Mars to remove the accoutrements of war on entering his elegiac poem (1–2). Statius adopts the same motif both to suggest his own poem's dissociation from the violence and the suffering associated with epic themes, and to reaffirm his own identity here as ministrant of peace and joy. Hercules is summoned to his new temple in pacified mood, 'pacatus mitisque ... nec turbidus ira' (39), a peaceful, domesticated god for a peaceful poem. 'Ira' of course evokes the intense emotions of epic and tragedy. The preceding negative suggests that the high flights of wrath, the extreme passions such as ravage Statius' *Thebaid*, are to be absent from the god and from Statius' poem.

The mythical guise which Statius invokes for Hercules for his entry to the temple is a comic one. Statius draws on the genial aspect of the god that was particularly popular in Hellenistic poetry and upon the kind of myth that is suitable for his personal poetry, recondite but humorous.[30] The god's physical prowess is transferred to the realm of amatory conquest: 'Come as you were on that night,' says Statius, 'when Thespius' jaw dropped in amazement, "totiens socer"' (43) – nicely put, for Thespius had fifty daughters, though one seems to have abstained on that particular night.[31] Statius' flippancy here suggests that the retreat from public poetry is accompanied by the demystification of myth as it enters the private, human realm. Myth is no longer – as it was in Statius' *Thebaid* or indeed Vergil's *Aeneid* – a vehicle for dealing with deep and universal issues. Its role instead is safe and unthreatening within a poem that has removed itself from dangerous matters of political concern. Nonetheless, to some extent myth is revitalised by being incorporated into daily life where its horror is lost along with its mystique.

Both poets refer to Hercules' labours as subjects to be avoided. Vergil begins the proem to *Georgics* 3 by singling out five myths as trite, outworn themes for poetry:

> quis aut Eurysthea durum
> aut inlaudati nescit Busiridis aras?
> cui non dictus Hylas puer et Latonia Delos
> Hippodameque umeroque Pelops insignis eburno,
> acer equis? (4–8)

[30] For the comic Hercules in Hellenistic literature and the Roman moralisation of the god see G. K. Galinsky, *The Herakles Theme* (Oxford, 1972); also D. Feeney, 'Following after Hercules, in Virgil and Apollonius', *PVS* 18 (1987), 47–85.

[31] This story is perhaps the subject of Euphorion in *Suppl. Hell.* fr. 418.16–17.

The first three of these all concern the labours of Hercules. In *Silvae* 3.1 Statius invites the god to his new temple but specifically tells him to leave behind the places associated with the labours. Like Vergil, but for different reasons, Statius feels such myths are not appropriate to his poem, for they deal with the heroic world of divine jealousy, strife and slaughter:

> ergo age, seu patrios liber iam legibus Argos
> incolis et mersum tumulis Eurysthea calcas,
> sive tu solium Iovis et virtute parata
> astra tenes haustumque tibi succincta beati
> nectaris excluso melior Phryge porrigit Hebe,
> huc ades et genium templis nascentibus infer.
> non te Lerna nocens nec pauperis arva Molorchi
> nec formidatus Nemees ager antraque poscunt
> Thracia nec Pharii polluta altaria regis. (23–31)

Although his list of labours is longer than Vergil's, Statius prominently begins and ends it with two of the major culprits mentioned by Vergil, first Eurystheus, and last Busiris ('Pharii ... regis'), the latter a king who features in the *Aetia*.[32] In his list Statius also refers to the fields of Molorchus, 'arva Molorchi' (*Silvae* 3.1.29), putting, like Vergil with his equivalent phrase 'lucosque Molorchi' (*Georgics* 3.19), the name Molorchus in the genitive case at the end of the hexameter line.

Thomas has suggested that Vergil's criticism of the myths concerning Hercules' labours is directed against Alexandrian poetry, and probably against Callimachus himself.[33] Vergil announces his intention to engage in a new kind of poetry, epic poetry that will deal with historical (or quasi-historical) and contemporary events, and he places a contemporary Roman leader, Octavian, in the centre of his temple, 'in medio mihi Caesar erit templumque tenebit' (*Georgics* 3.16). Like Vergil, Statius rejects as the subject of his poem the myth of the labours which Vergil singled out for criticism. His emphatic placement at the list's end of Busiris, the king who sacrificed his own seer, again suggests Statius' avoidance here of the darker themes which interested Callimachus.

However, he does not, like Vergil, reject Callimachean themes outright. Rather he reinterprets them and adapts them to the scope of his private, personal poetry. First of all, Pollius is a latter-day Molorchus. In Callimachus' account, Herakles' stay in Molorchus' impoverished cottage forms a prelude to his institution of the Nemean games. Similarly, Hercules' arrival in the abode Pollius offers him precedes the institution of Greek-style games on Pollius' estate. However, the humble cottage and impoverished host of Callimachus' version are emphatically rejected in *Silvae* 3.1, which begins with a strong condemnation of Hercules' formerly shabby abode and the barren landscape around it (1–22). In the 'Victoria Berenices' the countryside around Molorchus' hut likewise is barren, but for a specific reason, the ravages of the Nemean lion. Callimachus' Herakles presumably restores the fertility of the land, whereas Statius' Hercules transforms the land itself with a magnificent building. In *Silvae* 3.1 the values of poverty and humility are stood on their head, for the god's host is a wealthy Roman gentleman, and the poem celebrates his reception of Hercules in a magnificent temple. With its witty revision of Callimachus' story of Molorchus, *Silvae* 3.1 rejects the humble poverty which Callimachus and Hellenistic poets in general loved to depict. Of course Statius' beloved Augustan poets Horace

[32] Frr. 44–7 Pf.; Suppl. Hell. 252–3. Ovid pairs Busiris with king Phalaris (*Ars. Am. 1.* 647–56; *Trist.* 3.11.39–54). The precedent for this linkage probably goes back to Callimachus. See L. Lehnus, 'Callimaco Suppl Hell. 2.2', *ZPE* 80 (1990), 16.

[33] Thomas, pp. 94–101.

and Vergil associated the Italian countryside too with virtuous 'paupertas'. In *Silvae* 3.1 Statius humorously adapts Callimachus' story of the hosting of Hercules to the context of a Roman villa, and with the value he attaches to wealth and magnificence, he challenges the fondness of his Greek and Roman predecessors for rural poverty both as theme and stylistic metaphor.

Secondly, then, unlike Vergil Statius does not reject Hercules. He places the Greek god in the centre of his temple, and he gives him a prominent role in the poem. Likewise in the 'Victoria Berenices' Hercules is a central figure. But Statius has made clear that his Hercules is not engaged in violent slaughter. His heroic tasks have been completed, and his thirteenth labour can be a peaceable one. Statius' Hercules is the genial counterpart of Vergil's Octavian, a god who brings peace, not war. Thus Hercules is said both to inspire and mastermind the building of the temple, and at the end he speaks the encomium of Pollius and his wife (166–83). Statius thus answers Vergil's critique of the Hercules myth and of Callimachean themes in his own way, not by turning to epic themes and contemporary historical events like Vergil, but by finding a new, peacemaking role for Hercules on his friend's estate, in a personal aetiological poem that pays tribute to that friend's architectural ambitions.

However, Statius does not exclude epic themes entirely from his poem, although in true Callimachean manner he handles them in a burlesque way. For the narrative explaining the origins of the new temple he engages in a grand, hyperbolic style with epic resonances. He introduces this new phase of his poem with an invocation to the Muse of epic poetry Calliope (49–51). He here characterises his heightened style through the adjectives 'grande' (50) and 'tenso' (51), the latter an adjective that is the opposite of 'remissus', the adjective that Statius uses to characterise his 'Silvae' in the preface to Book 1 when he talks of playing 'remissiore stilo.'[34] However the characterisation of Hercules as a musician and companion of the Muse suggests that although the style is less relaxed, the playful, witty element remains.

In this part of the poem Statius draws particularly upon Vergil's *Aeneid*, not surprisingly, for critics have generally assumed that in the proem to *Georgics* 3 Vergil is referring to his future epic, the *Aeneid*.[35] By echoing the *Aeneid* Statius humorously shows that whereas Vergil rejected minor poetry for epic, he can nonetheless incorporate the *Aeneid* into the confines of his small poem.

Since Statius' Hercules does not appear as the god of state cult and the founder of the Ara Maxima, the poet makes no reference to the myth of the slaying of Cacus which plays an important role in Vergil's *Aeneid*. Instead however, through his explicit similes, Statius specifically recalls the *Aeneid* in two scenes, those featuring the storm and the divine crafting of the temple. First then, the storm that forces Pollius' guests to take refuge in the unimproved temple of Hercules is compared to the storm in *Aeneid* 4 which forced Dido and Aeneas to take refuge in a cave:

> delituit caelum et subitis lux candida cessit
> nubibus ac tenuis graviore favonius austro
> immaduit, qualem Libyae Saturnia nimbum
> attulit, Iliaco dum dives Elissa marito
> donatur testesque ululant per devia nymphae. (71–5)

The simile specifically evokes the cave scene in which Dido and Aeneas become 'married' in *Aeneid* 4.160–72, and Statius caps this reminiscence with the specific echo at the end of Vergil's phrase 'summoque ululârunt vertice Nymphae' (168). The cosmic grandeur of this scene in the *Aeneid* is viewed from the perspective of the daily life of Pollius and his friends in a comic manner. At the same time Statius' hyperbolic

[34] Cf. Quint. 11.3.42 and 11.3.99.

[35] Thomas, p. 101.

comparison is not without substance. He is setting the stage for the grandeur of the project of rebuilding the temple, a task in which Hercules is represented as playing a major part.

Second, Hercules' 'labour' in remodelling the temple (117–38) is compared to Vulcan's effort in making arms for Pallas prior to Venus' intercession for arms for Aeneas (*Aen.* 8.407–53). Statius evokes this scene first by verbal borrowing, for the image of flint melting in the furnace, 'silex curva fornace liquescit' (122), derives directly from the melting of steel in Vulcan's vast furnace: 'chalybs vasta fornace liquescit' (*Aen.* 8.446). Then again, as in the preceding example, Statius specifically evokes the Vergilian context through a simile:

> non tam grande sonat motis incudibus Aetne
> cum Brontes Steropesque ferit, nec maior ab antris
> Lemniacis fragor est ubi flammeus aegida caelat
> Mulciber et castis exornat Pallada donis. (130–3)

The making of Pallas' arms takes place in *Aeneid* 8 in Vulcan's workshop under Etna (418–19); Brontes and Steropes are specifically mentioned as his helpers (425), and Pallas' shield, 'aegida' (435), is singled out for mention. True to his depiction of Hercules as a peacemaking god, however, Statius does not compare him to any of the warmongering gods but to Vulcan, god of crafts; and the instruments he forges are to benefit his land, not destroy it.

With comic exaggeration Statius brings Vergil's epic into his poem where, like myth, it loses its privileged status. However, the specific recalls of the *Aeneid* are more than hyperbolic, rhetorical displays, more than ludic manipulation of epic and myth. These two scenes in Vergil's epic are crucial ones that act as catalysts for violence and war. The storm results in suicide and vengeance, the making of arms in terrible bloodshed. Within the confines of Statius' peaceful poem, however, epic loses its destructive potential. The result of the storm in *Silvae* 3.1 is the decision to build a bigger and better temple. Similarly, the result of Hercules' workmanship is the taming of the wilderness and the remaking of the temple itself, the focus of joy and peaceful celebration. In *Aeneid* 8 earth groans in pain as the work is performed – 'antra Aetnaea tonant, validique incudibus ictus / auditi referunt gemitus' (419–20), 'gemit impositis incudibus antrum' (451) – whereas Pollius' land echoes the sound of building with no suggestion of pain but rather of alliterative music – 'dites Capreae viridesque resultant / Taurubulae, et terris ingens redit aequoris echo' (128–9). 'Sonat' in the following line (130) suggests also that the sound is a pleasing one, for it recalls the musical application of 'sonabit' (50) in the special proem to the Muse of epic poetry that precedes the aetiological narrative explaining the new temple:

> sed quaenam subiti, veneranda, exordia templi
> dic age, Calliope; socius tibi grande sonabit
> Alcides tensoque modos imitabitur arcu. (49–51)

Statius here requests that Hercules imitate Calliope in the grand style, 'grande sonabit' (50). The comparison between Hercules and the Muse is humorous, but it also has a serious aspect, for it suggests that Hercules' extra labour is a creative, pleasing one. He affects the grand style, but in a productive way. The proem prepares us for Statius' double-edged treatment of epic in the aetiological narrative of *Silvae* 3.1, hyperbolic and therefore humorously deflatory, but at the same time with a serious aspect.

From the start of his 'epic' narrative, then, Statius hints that his grand style seeks to celebrate creation, not destruction, peace not war. Thus in adapting epic themes and the grand style to his personal poem, Statius makes clear how he alters generic

expectations, for he averts the violence inherent in epic song and celebrates the turning of Hercules' heroic energies to peaceful, creative ends. The elevated style of epic poetry is now used to reflect humour and joy.

Statius makes one further revision of Vergil's proem. Statius and Vergil share the same attitude to nature as a force essentially hostile to humans that requires hard, persistent labour and moral determination to make useful. For instance, in Book 1 of the *Georgics* Vergil compares the farmer to a rower who is trying to head upstream. Should he relax his arms for a moment, he will be swept to disaster (197–203). Callimachus portrays the countryside around Molorchus' hut as in a state of decay, but this is due to the ravages of the Nemean lion, not to an inherently uncooperative nature. There is no reason for the barrenness and shabbiness of Hercules' former abode in *Silvae* 3.1 beyond human neglect. In turning a harsh, unpromising landscape to use, Statius' Hercules embodies the virtues of the georgic hero. The new temple to Hercules transforms a sterile, useless landscape, initially described as 'litora ... / nuda' (3–4), into a place that is both beautiful and useful:

> steriles hic nuper harenas
> ad sparsum pelago montis latus hirtaque dumis
> saxa nec ulla pati facilis vestigia terras
> cernere erat. quaenam subito fortuna rigentis
> ditavit scopulos? (12–16)

As in Vergil's *Georgics*, the conflict between man and nature is portrayed in moral terms:

> deus attulit arces
> erexitque suas, atque obluctantia saxa
> summovit nitens et magno pectore montem
> reppulit: immitem credas iussisse novercam. (19–22)

Here we see yet another dimension to Hercules, who is presented here not as the genial seducer of Hellenistic poetry but as the georgic hero who fights against a wilfully opposing nature. The rebuilding of the temple matches Hercules' labours in effort and moral courage. The hostility of nature is portrayed through 'obluctantia', the glorious effort of the god through 'nitens'. With 'magno pectore' Statius suggests that Hercules' actions are morally good, not simply energetic; elsewhere he describes the opposing mountain in ethical terms as 'maligni' (110). Moral terms then are used to justify Hercules' achievements – technological, to be sure – but Statius seems to have seen the transformation of the land through architecture and agriculture as complementary activities. In *Silvae* 2.2, a poem praising Pollius' estate in more general terms, Hercules is portrayed as an agricultural deity in his temple, the guardian of 'felicia rura' (23), and both the beautiful villa and the productive farm land are praised.[36] As in Vergil's *Georgics*, Hercules' transformation of the land is seen as morally useful, not self-indulgently luxurious.[37] Here in *Silvae* 3.1 Hercules harnesses his great physical prowess and moral courage to creative ends.

[36] At line 10 of *Silvae* 3.1 Statius refers to Hercules in his unimproved temple as 'agresti'. This derogatory sense of boorish, unsophisticated, approximates that of 'rusticus' in Vergil's *Ecl.* 2.56, and is not meant to be a negative reflection on the farmer's arts.

[37] At the poem's end Hercules praises Pollius for imitating him in what is seen as a moral and religious act: 'macte animis opibusque meos imitate labores / qui rigidas rupes infecundaque pudenda / naturae deserta domas et vertis in usum / lustra habitata feris foedeque latentia profers / numina' (166–70). With 'infecundaque pudenda', and 'foedeque latentia' Statius matches moral and physical terms. The juxtaposition too of 'animis' with 'opibus' suggests that wealth for Statius is a praiseworthy attribute, one to be equated with spiritual and moral riches. There is no mention here in this passage of any private pleasure principle at work.

We can therefore see here a further complex aspect to Statius' relationship to Vergil. *Silvae* 3.1 concerns a georgic theme, the improvement of the land and the taming of a hostile nature. Newmyer has argued that the *Silvae* are important expressions of a Flavian aesthetic deriving from a concept of imperial power based upon grandeur, size and the outdoing of nature.[38] But in *Silvae* 3.1 nature is not 'outdone' simply as a way of expressing human superiority. The land is not blasted and destroyed by a tyrannical master. Rather nature is improved and benefitted so that it becomes of use, and harmony with its human inhabitants becomes possible. In Vergil's *Georgics* this creative, beneficial transformation of the land is the goal of the farmer who has to battle constantly against an inherently hostile nature. Through his similar description of nature as hostile, Statius makes the transformation of the landscape seem necessary, not the product of a rich man's whims.

In *Silvae* 3.1 Statius turns his back on the tragedy and bloodshed found in Vergil's epic and implied in his metaphorical temple. Whereas Vergil in the proem to *Georgics* 3 separated his georgic poetry clearly from epic with the Ennian wish to scale greater heights – 'temptanda via est, qua me quoque possim / tollere humo victorque virum volitare per ora (8–9)[39] – Statius wittily incorporates Vergil's anticipated epic into the confines of his own rural poem. Statius' relationship with the proem to *Georgics* 3 is then a complex one. He answers Vergil's rejection of Hellenistic mythologising and of georgic poetry with his own vindication of his retreat from public poetry. His personal poetry offers peace rather than war, pleasant myth rather than politics, and celebrates the civilising collusion of the human and the divine, a collusion that becomes possible within private life. *Silvae* 3.1 avoids the polarities of epic with its warring deities. Within brief confines it skilfully harmonises epic, georgic, mythic, and personal elements. Through this interplay with the proem to *Georgics* 3 as well as with Callimachus, Statius asserts the independent value of the new kind of poetry he is writing in the *Silvae*.

The poems of both Vergil and Statius then concern the improvement of nature through the taming of its hostile elements. Ironically, however, whereas Vergil rejects both Hercules and georgic poetry, Statius affirms the value of both. Whereas Statius' temple is a glowing emblem of this georgic activity within the private sphere, Vergil's temple celebrates the deeds of war. This brings us to the second of the two ways in which Statius defines his own poetic stance, through the relationship between the building of the temple and the writing of his poetry.[40]

Like Vergil, Statius uses the temple as a metaphor for his poetry. The temple in the proem to *Georgics* 3 symbolises the new, Roman, historical epic that Vergil proposes to write. Since epic employs the grandest style, the temple is built of the finest materials: gold, ivory (26), and marble (34). The epic is intended to honour the new Caesar, and thus a statue of Octavian occupies its centre (16); the doors are engraved with pictures of his military victories in both East and West (26–33); and statues celebrate the genealogy of the Julian race and pay tribute to Caesar's supremacy (34–6).

Although the temple to Hercules described in *Silvae* 3.1 is an actual one, in several ways it too reflects the complex features of Statius' poetry in the *Silvae*. First, the temple is built at amazing speed. The first lines of the poem particularly record Statius' amazement at the swiftness of the rebuilding, summarised in the phrase 'o

[38] S. Newmyer, 'The Triumph of Art over Nature: Martial and Statius on Flavian Aesthetics', *Helios* (1984), 1–7.

[39] Ennius, *Epigr.* 18 V: 'volito vivus per ora virum'.

[40] On architectural metaphors see Thomas, pp. 96–9.

velox pietas' (12). Swiftness of composition is the feature of the *Silvae* that Statius emphasises most in his prose prefaces; he makes it their hallmark in the introductory preface to the first collection when he tells his friend Stella that the poems flowed from him in a sudden heat and with some pleasure in the haste, 'mihi subito calore et quadam festinandi voluptate fluxerunt.' And Statius tells us in the preface to Book 3 that the poem on the temple of Hercules was written on the spot: '... statim ut videram, his versibus adoravi'. Of course the programmatic nature of *Silvae* 3.1 and its correspondence with the 'seal' poem *Silvae* 3.5 suggests that there may have been revision before publication or that the poems were not as improvisational as Statius claims.[41] What matters is that Statius in *Silvae* 3.1 gives the *impression* of speed with, for instance, his short, breathless questions and exclamations of wonder.[42] And by giving the impression of speed and yet producing a polished poem, he makes the reader as amazed at his artistry as he himself is by the beautiful temple.

Second, in the same preface Statius points to their playful element, 'praeluserit', a feature that is evident in the witty use he makes of both epic and of Hercules himself whose cultic statue within the temple portrays the god in a genial, festive mood. His relationship with Callimachus, too, is essentially playful, as he constructs an aetion from a very minor occasion, Pollius' need for a new rain shelter for his guests, and he wittily subverts the Molorchus story told at the start of *Aetia* 3. The playfulness has a serious side, however. Statius avoids the eccentricities of Callimachean aetia, the sometimes grim obscurity, the interest in poverty and humble life, features that do not suit the life of cultivated, philosophical leisure and detachment from public life which he wishes to exalt. And he establishes his own aesthetic criteria of opulence and grandeur in building and in speech.

Third, the poems are rooted in Greek rhetorical topoi. As Hardie has shown, Statius' *Silvae* evolve from the Greek tradition of epideictic oratory and poetry, and *Silvae* 3.1 represents specifically an anathematic epigram recording the dedication of a temple expanded by means of two kletic hymns to Hercules, an epic-style, aetiological narrative, and 'occasional' material.[43] Correspondingly, the temple is in the Greek part of Italy, supported, we are told at the poem's start, by 'Graisque . . metallis' (5). Hercules himself is not the Roman god of imperial cult. As we have seen, the poem too is an aetion in the Callimachean tradition and has many links with Callimachean themes, although Statius freely interprets these. Most importantly, he violates Callimachean tenets of meticulously crafted poetry by proclaiming the improvisational but heightened nature of his *Silvae*.

Fourth, just as Hercules is asked to abandon his warlike accoutrements for his cultic pose in Pollius' temple, so Statius with the *Silvae* has turned from his role as epic poet recording the deeds of war. Moreover, the Callimachean spectre of 'Invidia' which unsettlingly haunts the end of Vergil's portrait of his temple (*G.* 3.37–9), is notably absent from Statius' peaceful poem.

[41] I do not agree with Hardie that 'Statius could not write manifesto poems to introduce a collection which had been written for individual delivery' (p. 182). *Silvae* 3.1 contains a poetic programme that would undoubtedly please Pollius, who was also a poet. Moreover, before publication Statius surely had time to deliberate over the placement of each poem. A poem to Pollius should begin Book 3, since the book is dedicated to him, but why could Statius not equally well have used *Silvae* 2.2, a more elaborate descriptive poem on Pollius' villa (assuming that the first three books of the *Silvae* were published as a collection)? *Silvae* 3.1 makes an important programmatic opening to a book that, as I argue in this article, was very carefully arranged.

[42] E.g. lines 8–11: '... tune ille reclusi / liminis et parvae custos inglorius arae? unde haec aula recens fulgorque inopinus agresti / Alcidae? sunt fata deum, sunt fata locorum!'

[43] Hardie, pp. 125–8.

Fifth, the temple is an audacious endeavour. When Hercules urges Pollius to the task he does so in these words: 'incipe et Herculeis fidens hortatibus aude' (114). In the preface to Book 3 Statius characterises his style to Pollius as 'hanc audaciam stili nostri'. In other words, he is taking risks and trying something new in a hyperbolic manner. In proclaiming the improvisational quality of his *Silvae* Statius has shown himself to be no Callimachean clone. In particular, his incorporation into the short poem of the grand style, particularly such hyperbolic elements as his inflated play with epic, his expressions of wonder at the speed with which the temple is built and its magnificence, also reflect his audacity.[44] Moreover, his creative interplay with both Vergil and Callimachus and his revision of their ethical and poetic values, noticeably in his hyperbolic treatment of the Vergilian similes as well as in his 'upgrading' of Callimachus' Molorchus, is the mark of a bold and playful experimenter.

Finally, the temple is not a public monument as Vergil's seems to be. It is built for private celebrations on Pollius' Campanian estate. Religion here is not a matter of civic, public duty but is co-opted by a private individual. The temple therefore is an analogue to the poet's retreat from public poetry and contemporary politics, a symbol of a change in direction opposite to that taken by Vergil. Its dissociation too from the sinister cultic activity that interested Callimachus' aetiological researches emphasises the peaceful, joyful nature of the poem and its suitability for a patron leading, as Pollius did, a sequestered life devoted to philosophy.[45]

My point can perhaps be succinctly summed up by considering these poets' use of the idea of sacrifice that accompanies a temple dedication. In the preface to the *Aetia* 23–4, Callimachus, followed by Vergil in *Eclogue* 6 and other Augustan poets, used sacrifice as a metaphor for poetic production – epic victims should be big animals, the neoteric victim should be slender.[46] In the proem to *Georgics* 3 Vergil will delight in the sacrifice of heifers at his temple – 'iuvat caesosque videre iuvencos' (22–3);

[44] Coleman, p. xxvi, sees speed of composition as constituting Statius' 'audacia' in opposition to Vessey, *CPh* 66 (1971), 274, who understands it to refer to 'strained' Latin usage. I interpret this concept more broadly as referring to his hyperbolic, improvisational, and innovative style. Newmyer, op. cit (n. 38), has argued that Statius' hyperbolic style is one of the hallmarks of an imperial aesthetic in the *Silvae*. But Newmyer derives this aesthetic from only three poems concerning Domitian in the first three books, 1.1., 1.6, and 2.5, and Statius' attitude towards the emperor in these poems is extremely problematic. F. Ahl, op. cit. (n. 8), pp. 91–102, interprets *Silvae* 1.1 as a masterpiece of ironic double-entendre that undercuts Domitian's heroic pretensions. *Silvae* 1.6 and *Silvae* 2.5 both concern Domitian's perversions of nature. The former, an account of the entertainments given by Domitian on the Saturnalia, emphasise the emperor's excess and decadence; these qualities are obviously far distant from the moderation Statius admires in Melior and Pollius. *Silvae* 2.5, an account of the death in the amphitheatre of a tame lion, harks on the pointlessness of making a pet out of this wild beast, in other words of perverting its nature for the sake of the emperor's pleasure in the amphitheatre. The poem ends ironically with Domitian, after so many animals killed for entertainment, shedding a tear for the lion, a conceit whose effect is undercut by the poet's reference to the numerous other animals killed for entertainment. This poem makes a sharp contrast with the preceding one on the death of Melior's pet parrot, *Silvae* 2.4. The bird, with its clever facility for speech, was clearly well treated and had no reason, unlike the lion, to regret its domestication. See J. J. Garvey, '*Silvae* 2.5 and Statius' Art', *Latomus* 48 (1989), 627–31. The other poems in Books 1–3 do not concern state occasions. As Thomas has shown (pp. 109–10), the hyperbolic style expressing amazement and admiration at the magnificence of artistic achievements derives from the Hellenistic ecphrastic tradition. *Silvae* 3.1 is not itself an ecphrasis, but Statius' enthusings over the temple are in line with the expressions of 'awe and wonder' common to such descriptions of works of art.

[45] In *Silvae* 2.2 Statius describes Pollius in terms of an Epicurean philosopher, aloof from the storms and troubles of the world in his cliff-top villa. Cf. particularly 131–2.

[46] E.g. Vergil, *Ecl.* 6.4–5; Horace, *Odes* 4.2.53–60.

bloodshed, and the slaughtering of the large animal that is sacrificed to Jupiter, are fit symbols for an epic poem. Statius' offering, on the other hand, will be not blood, not a public sacrifice in the manner of state religion, but a private offering, his own poem, *Silvae* 3.1 – 'haec ego nascentes laetus bacchatus ad aras / libamenta tuli' (163–4), this is the offering which in joy and ecstasy I have brought to the new altars. In avoiding bloodshed, whether of a large victim or a slender, and in celebrating birth and new time ('nascentes') rather than death and past time, Statius suggests his independence from both Callimachus and Vergil. Here Statius interprets the metaphor of sacrifice literally. His is a worthy offering within a sphere separate from state religion and politics. He draws attention with pride to the special qualities of his own poetic production, a small poem but a joyful one in an emotionally heightened style, as 'bacchatus' suggests.

Thus the temple to Hercules reflects the complex features of Statius' own poetry in these first three books: speedily composed, joyful and playful of mood, peaceful of theme, Hellenistic in various topoi, grand in style, and innovative. The poem has been called an ecphrasis, but in fact we are given very few details of the temple's appearance beyond general references at the poem's start to 'nitidos postes Graisque effulta metallis / culmina' (5–6), and the fact that it has a new 'aula' and unexpected brilliance (10).[47] Statius focuses his attention on the temple's making rather than its appearance, and selects the details carefully so that his temple can act as a metaphor of his poetic production as well as reflect upon the virtues of Pollius.

In *Silvae* 3.1 Statius, taking stock of the evolution of his poetry from the opening of Book 1 with a poem addressed to Domitian,[48] expresses the aesthetic which dominates the first three books of the *Silvae* and which comes to full maturity in Book 3, an aesthetic which is articulated through the creative interplay with the proem to *Georgics* 3 as well as with *Aetia* 3. Inasmuch as this special aesthetic is a response to the political circumstances of Flavian Rome, it reflects the poet's awareness that the attempt to find a public official voice in imperial court circles was fraught with dangers and uncertainties.[49] Statius' temple is a symbol of a retreat both from public poetry and from public life.

The very title *Silvae*, I believe, offers a challenge to Vergil, for Statius is writing his own version of rural poetry. Although the *Silvae* have often been called 'occasional poetry', the poetic programme of *Silvae* 3.1 indicates that these are not trivial poems for they celebrate the personal side of life and the civilising arts. Indeed, the frustrations Vergil demonstrates with both his subject and his poetry in *Georgics* 3 find a positive response in *Silvae* 3.1. *Georgics* 3 ends with an account of the terrible plague which no human art can check (478–566). But whereas Vergil portrays the ultimate failure of human beings to control nature, Statius' *Silvae* 3.1 is above all a celebration of human beings' triumph over a wayward or malignant nature through architecture or poetry. Just as Pollius – with the help of Hercules – tamed the woods on his estate and created a beautiful landscape and temple, so, I would argue, Statius brilliantly used self-conscious, densely allusive literary artistry to tame and transform his 'silvae' – the raw material of his poetry – into carefully crafted poems.

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[47] Thomas, p. 113 n. 120.

[48] On *Silvae* 1.1 see Ahl, op. cit. (n. 8).

[49] On the possible political implications of Statius' retreat to private poetry see Hardie, above note 20. The main conclusions we can draw from this study of *Silvae* 3.1, however, are that Statius' concerns were philosophical and aesthetic rather than political in a narrow sense, and that they evolve from an intimate dialogue with his major predecessors in the form of the rural encomiastic poem.